

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 05339 072045Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----054148 072049Z /46
O 072020Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1506

S E C R E T LA PAZ 5339

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BL
SUBJECT: TIMING OF ELECTIONS RESULTS AND OUR PUBLIC
RESPONSE TO THEM

REF: STATE 171057

1. IN THIS FAR-FLUNG, INEFFICIENTLY ADMINISTERED COUNTRY, THE RESULTS OF THE JULY 9 ELECTION WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE PROMPTLY. THE VOTES WILL BE INITIALLY COUNTED WHERE CAST AND THE RESULTS TELEPHONED OR CABLED TO THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT IN LA PAZ. ON THIS BASIS, THE COURT MAY BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE A PRELIMINARY OR PRESUMPTIVE RESULT, BASED ON A LARGE SHARE OF REPORTED RETURNS IN THE COURSE OF MONDAY, JULY 10. HOWEVER, THIS RESULT WILL NOT BE OFFICIAL.

2. THE ELECTORAL COURT WILL ANNOUNCE AN OFFICIAL COUNT LATER, BASED ON NOTARIZED RESULTS HAND DELIVERED FROM DEPARTMENTAL ELECTORAL COURTS. LEGALLY THE NATIONAL COURT HAS 30 DAYS TO COMPLETE THIS COUNT BUT EXPECTS TO HAVE IT BY JULY 15.

3. BY THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 10, STORIES WILL BE FILED ON THE (PRESUMPTIVE) BOLIVIAN ELECTION RESULTS. THEREFORE, AT THE MORNING BRIEFING ON JULY 11 THE DEPARTMENT MAY BE ASKED TO COMMENT. AT THAT POINT WE SHOULD SAY SOMETHING GENERAL,
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SUCH AS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING, DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME.
A. WE WELCOME THE PEACEFUL COURSE OF BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS AS A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARD BOLIVIA'S RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE. X APPEARS TO HAVE EMERGED THE VICTOR BUT UNDER BOLIVIAN LAW AN OFFICIAL RESULT MUST BE DETERMINED BY THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT, WHICH IS NOT EXPECTED TO COMPLETE ITS WORK FOR SEVERAL DAYS YET.

OR B. WE WELCOME THE PEACEFUL COURSE OF BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS AS A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARD BOLIVIA'S RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE. IT APPEARS THAT NO CANDIDATE RECEIVED THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY NECESSARY FOR DIRECT ELECTION IN BOLIVIA. IF THIS RESULT IS CONFIRMED BY THE ELECTORAL COURT, THE NEW BOLIVIAN CONGRESS, ELECTED ON JULY 9, WILL CHOOSE THE NEW PRESIDENT. THIS DECISION SHOULD BE TAKEN BY THE SECOND WEEK OF AUGUST.

4. WHILE THIS MISSION IS DEVOTING ALL THE INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYTICAL RESOURCES WE HAVE TO AN EXAMINATION OF ANY IRREGULARITIES IN THE ELECTORAL RESULT, WE ARE NOT LIKELY TO HAVE A COMPLETE ASSESSMENT BY JULY 11. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, BE A BIG MISTAKE FOR THE USG PUBLICLY TO JUDGE THE FAIRNESS OF THE ELECTION RESULT BEFORE WE KNOW THE FACTS. THE TYPE OF IRREGULARITY WE ARE LOOKING FOR WILL BE A LIMITED AMOUNT OF DOUBLE VOTING, AND VOTE TAMPERING THAT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DETECT AND ASSESS.

5. IF THE DEPARTMENT IS ASKED JULY 11 TO COMMENT ON THE FAIRNESS OF THE ELECTIONS, WE WOULD PREFER TO AVOID COMMENT, SAYING THAT SUCH JUDGMENTS SHOULD AWAIT THE OFFICIAL RESULTS FROM THE BOLIVIAN ELECTORAL COURT WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. IN FACT, FROM OUR OWN CONTACT WITH THE COURT, INTELLIGENCE AND OTHER SOURCES, WE

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MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE OUR ASSESSMENT EARLIER. BUT IT COULD STILL BE UNWISE TO CHARACTERIZE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS BEFORE THE ELECTORAL COURT HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND AUTHENTICATE AN OFFICIAL RESULT.

6. THE EXTENT OF ANY IRREGULARITIES SIMPLY CANNOT BE PREDICTED UNTIL ALL THE ACTUAL VOTES ARE IN. WE HAVE HAD ONE POSSIBLY HOPEFUL DEVELOPMENT TODAY. WE KNOW FROM CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES THAT THE DEPARTMENTAL AUTHORITIES OF LA PAZ HAD SUBMITTED 865,000 VOTER REGISTRATIONS TO THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT, A TOTAL WE ESTIMATED TO INCLUDE AS MANY AS 100,000 DOUBLE AND OTHERWISE ILLEGAL REGISTRATIONS. AFTER LONG DELIVERATION BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE LA PAZ AND THE NATIONAL COURT, THE LA PAZ COURT HAS NOW REPORTED 718,000 REGISTERED VOTERS. AS BEST WE CAN TELL, APPROVED VOTER REGISTRATIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT ARE NOW ABOUT IN LINE WITH WHAT ONE WOULD EXPECT FROM THE CENSUS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAPAZ05339
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780279-0810
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780786/aaaacuvy.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9f60e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 171057
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2089809
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TIMING OF ELECTIONS RESULTS AND OUR PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THEM
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BL, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9f60e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014